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The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
U.S. House of Representatives
1728 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Giffords:

This letter is being sent to you following a briefing about inadequate border fencing that was presented recently to the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) to the U.S. Border Patrol, Nogales Station. We need to correct an untenable situation, one which is endangering the lives of Border Patrol agents and turning back the clock on downtown security here in Nogales. I am making this request in on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Board.

I am one of the remaining Charter Members in this organization which has gained prominence as the longest-standing CAB in Border Patrol history. As I've said often in our meetings, we are not an arm of the Border Patrol nor do we represent them; our function is to provide a viable interface between the community and the Border Patrol. In the past we've presented some serious headaches for the local station as well as valuable input that has led to changes in border relations and led to the development of some significant intelligence.

Years ago, the downtown area was protected from illegal transgressions through the utilization of chain link fencing. It was more than adequate for the culture of the times. As illicit drugs and illegal immigration began rising, some misinformed soul in Washington, D.C. decided to replace the easily breached chain link with some aluminum grill material. (And that's exactly how it was used; daily, huge pieces of the fencing were cut out and taken into Nogales, Sonora daily to be used as covers on barbecue grills!)

Ultimately, that flimsy barrier was replaced by steel landing mats erected in both directions from downtown Nogales in 1993. It served a purpose of a period that far exceeded its limited value.

In more recent times, bollard-type fencing (reinforced steel and concrete quay supports) has been installed, first to the west and then to the east, providing a formidable control barrier. The fence installed to the west of Nogales has been more easily breached than that to the east, because the engineers finally listened to Border Patrol agents who work the area and made the bollards virtually impossible to breach.

An additional benefit of the bollards is that they can be spaced to permit visual access to the agents and the surveillance cameras. This system is working so well that the criminal

element has now been attracted to the rapidly deteriorating landing mats that provide almost non-existent security to downtown Nogales. There are about 2.8 miles of such fencing and it is creating a costly series of problems. First and foremost, attacks on agents are expanding exponentially and the agents have no way to defend themselves from projectiles launched from the Mexican side of the border. They don't know the huge rocks are on the way until they get hit.

Cutting through the rusty landing mats has become so easy that downtown Nogales is rapidly returning to the situation of pre-landing mat fencing, with the criminal element making a significant incursion, thus endangering local citizens and visitors. We are exposed to vandalism, theft, and physical threats on an increasing basis.

As an aside, this constant breaching of the landing mats is costing manpower and funds just to provide makeshift fixes. Though I've been unable to get an actual dollar amount for those "fixes," it is obvious that the cost is running into six figures annually. In these crunch times, it would seem more expedient to free-up agents and bring in a skilled crew to replace the landing mats with bollards. It will also be cheaper now than later.

Hence, what I am requesting is support from Congresswoman Giffords for obtaining funds to accomplish this beneficial replacement.

Best,

Jim Price
Charter Member
Citizens Advisory Board to the U.S. Border Patrol, Nogales Station